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ABSTRACT

This paper reviews the literature on educational reform, especially in relation to special education and students with disabilities. It reviews 10 reports published since 1983 that identified issues in educational reform. Observations include: regular education reformers have not adequately addressed the issues of students with disabilities; special educators have not addressed the failure of public schools to meet the needs of nondisabled students; efficacy studies of special education indicate limited or negative effects of special education; both regular and special educators are concerned with low expectations and devaluation of specific groups; both regular and special educators are concerned with transition from school to adulthood; issues of access for students with disabilities have receded and issues of quality and effectiveness have come to the forefront; and issues of school restructuring are of concern to both regular and special educators. The report's concluding recommendation calls for a cooperatively focused research agenda that is predicated upon the complete elimination of any distinction between regular and special education. Other recommendations include changing graduation criteria to accommodate the intellectual diversity of students and applying best special educational practices to the major problems of regular education. (Contains 56 references.) (DB)

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Chapter 4

Educational Reform and Special Education: Foundations for a National Research Agenda Focused Upon Secondary Education

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Abstract

In this paper we review recent literature addressing education reform. In particular, we describe the context, attitudes, and perspectives of authors in relation to students with disabilities. Notably, we suggest several observations and implications related to the education of young people with disabilities. Finally, we recommend a cooperatively focused agenda that is predicated upon the complete elimination of any distinction between regular and special education.

Educational Reform and Special Education: Foundations for a National Research Agenda Focused Upon Secondary Education

Passage of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act Amendments of 1990 (P.L. 101-476) marked a new era of accountability in secondary education and transition-related services. The intent of this mandate is to ensure that students with disabilities receive a coordinated education that results in desired post-school outcomes, including the likelihood of post-secondary education and training, probable employment, and living independently. The promise for the future is the emergence of an educational system that will result in benefits for all students with disabilities after leaving school.

Unfortunately, this hallmark legislation arrives at a time when American education is in the throes of a severe crisis. There is ample evidence that schools are failing to achieve desired and expected outcomes for all students regardless of ability (e.g., Boyer, 1983; Education Commission of the States, 1983; Goodlad, 1984; Kozol, 1991; National Assessment of Educational Progress, 1990; National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983; Powell, Farrar, & Cohen, 1985; Sizer, 1992; Toch, 1991). Serious questions have been raised about the effectiveness of mandatory education. These questions pose a serious dilemma for educators working for the full inclusion of students with disabilities into the mainstream of American public education.

In our opinion, the success of IDEA being implemented as envisioned by its formulators hinges upon the health of all elements of public school education. In this paper, we review the literature on education reform in order to: (a) summarize the major issues of concern addressed by the literature, (b) determine the extent to which issues related to students with disabilities have been addressed, (c) describe the context, attitudes, and perspectives of students with disabilities presented in the literature, (d) describe some general observations and implications related to the education of persons with disabilities, and (e) recommend that education reformists, policy makers, researchers, the education community, and the

general public develop a cooperatively-focused agenda. This final recommendation is predicated upon the complete elimination of any distinction between regular and special education.

Education Reform

Education in general and schools in particular have come under close scrutiny and intense criticism over the past 10 years. This criticism, however, is not unique to the 1980's; education has been a popular target of reform for over four decades. Arthur Bestor's (1953) book entitled, Educational Wastelands, was an early example calling for the reform of secondary education and a harbinger of events to come. Since then, and particularly during the 1980s, the number of reports calling for education reform increased dramatically. Most recently, Toch (1991) traced the growth and status of the excellence in education movement during the 1980s. He cited more than 17 different reports focusing upon education reform. Interestingly, few national reports have focused in any significant way upon educational reform that addresses children who do not go on to college. Further, most existing reports ignored young people at risk, young people with disabilities, and young people who wish to be taught how to obtain a meaningful job and live in our society with the primary goal of being a satisfied and contributing member. We reviewed ten reports published since 1983 to identify issues comprising the current focus and national agenda for education reform. In particular, these reports were selected on the basis of their wide publicity and impact on education reform efforts.

A Nation at Risk (NCEE, 1983)

A Nation at Risk: The Imperative for Educational Reform was released by the National Commission on Excellence in Education (NCEE, 1983). Thirteen performance and achievement indicators were identified by the National Commission as being below national expectations. Of these 13 indicators, 10 were drawn from the results of standardized tests. In addition to identifying indicators of problems associated with student performance and achievement, the National Commission also presented findings related to curricular

content, instructional time, and teaching (e.g., preparation, qualifications, availability). Recommendations were presented in these and other areas of concern (e.g., leadership and fiscal support). Two statements acknowledged concern for students with disabilities. The first was the acknowledgment of a teacher shortage for "handicapped students." A second recommendation called for extending the school year to ensure time for programs for students with special needs.

Making the Grade (TCF, 1983)

Making the Grade was released by the Twentieth Century Fund Task Force on Federal Elementary and Secondary Education Policy (TCF, 1983). The first section of this report included findings of the task force. The remainder of the report included a background paper written by Paul E. Peterson for the Twentieth Century Fund that provided the basis for the organization of the task force. This latter section addressed the federal role in education over the past few decades with a specific focus on how "...the federal government [should] assist in the maintenance and operation of the nation's elementary and secondary schools" (p. 34).

Ten areas of concern were discussed, including: (a) excessive burdens on schools and teachers; (b) federal presence and involvement in education; (c) federal commitment to education; (d) the quality of congressional and executive leadership; (e) the quality of teachers; (f) literacy in the English language; (g) competency and skill in science and mathematics; (h) improvement and expansion of educational research; (i) opportunities for parents to choose schools; and, (j) leadership of local and state governments in education.

In his background paper included in the report, Peterson (1983) wrote that "While areas of deficiency can be discerned, there is little evidence for concluding that the American system of education is in serious trouble, much less that it has failed" (p. 35). Of interest was the focus of the paper on the problems associated with pull-out programs, bilingual education, and the Education of All Handicapped Children Act (P.L. 94-142). Peterson (1983)

concluded with recommendations that established the basis for the organization of the task force by the Twentieth Century Fund.

Several observations about the Twentieth Century Fund's report are noteworthy, particularly in contrast with other reports released during the early 1980s. This report viewed efforts to educate students with disabilities in a favorable light by stating, "Accordingly, the Task Force supports continuing federal efforts to provide special educational programs for the poor and for the handicapped" (p. 15). However, several concerns also were noted in the background paper by Peterson (1983). In particular, escalating costs, difficulties associated with identification and classification of students with disabilities, and many of the procedural requirements of P.L. 94-142 were mentioned. Peterson (1983) also addressed concerns with the efficacy of Title I pull-out programs although the involvement of students with disabilities was not specifically discussed.

High School: A Report on Secondary Education in America (Boyer, 1983)

Boyer (1983) provided supporting evidence of declines in student performance and achievement. Boyer (1983) also provided a brief review of the history of American schools including an analysis of the goals of American public education and an examination of course requirements and curricular content. Recommendations were proposed for the composition of a core curriculum with a clear emphasis on academic subjects. One core proposal was "The meaning of vocation," which involved an academic approach to the understanding of the culture, significance, and value of work.

Interestingly, Boyer (1983) included a chapter entitled "Transition to Work and Learning" implying that transition involves "moving from high school to college or to work" (p. 118). Boyer (1983) raised several concerns relevant to the transition of students from high school to work. For example, he noted, "Most high schools have little or no information about what their vocational-education graduates are doing" (p. 121). He argued that studies have shown that job prospects for graduates of vocational programs are no better than those for students in nonspecialized programs. Boyer (1983) also addressed the

issue of tracking by citing evidence that many students were enrolled in vocational programs due to the belief that they were unable to be successful with academic subjects. Boyer (1983) proposed a "Transition School" in which students would be given the opportunity to pursue more specialized training or "elective clusters" during their last two years of schooling.

Under the rubric of "special students," Boyer (1983) addressed concerns of the gifted and high-risk student. High-risk students were described solely in terms of students who drop out of school. Boyer (1983) recommended linkages among high schools, colleges and businesses. Once again, he addressed the needs of gifted and "needy" students. "Needy students" were described in terms of individuals experiencing difficulty with English as a second language. Finally, Boyer (1984) addressed issues related to school management and leadership and then devoted a chapter to an analysis of the public and fiscal support for public education. Examples were provided that illustrated the need for additional resources to repair and upgrade deteriorating school buildings and equipment. The final chapter proposed recommendations for improving the quality of general education.

Clearly, this text made a significant contribution to providing evidence for the concerns of early educational reformists. However, it is important to note that this text made not a single reference to programs, issues, or concerns of students with disabilities in American public schools.

Horace's Compromise (Sizer, 1992)

Horace's Compromise (Sizer, 1992) was originally published in 1984. This report provided an overview of the conditions of schools from the perspective of Horace, a composite and fictitious character, who Sizer (1992) believed represented many veteran, public school teachers. Sizer (1992) provided an ethnographic perspective that adopted an "insider's" or "roaming the hall" view of the conditions of schools. In essence, Sizer (1992) echoed many of the findings of Boyer (1983) while articulating in great detail the ambience, human qualities, and dilemmas of the typical American school. However, Sizer (1992) took

issue with some of the recommendations for reform proposed by Boyer (1983) and other reports. For example, Sizer (1992) considered the legislation of a mandatory common core of subjects to be "...an abuse of state power, an excessive reach of political authority" (p. 88). He recommended the cessation of compulsory schooling and the institution of voluntary schooling upon the attainment of minimum educational competencies. However, he also suggested that there was a need for a more cohesive and a well articulated curriculum. Sizer (1992) recommended that the curriculum become more focused on fewer subjects with an emphasis on core academic subjects. He cited the Paideia Proposal (Adler, 1982) as an example.

Only one reference was made by Sizer (1992) to students with disabilities. A student with a severe hearing impairment was quoted to demonstrate the educational motivations of a student with a disability.

A Place Called School: Prospects for the Future (Goodlad, 1984)

A Place Called School (Goodlad, 1984) was the second in the series of scholarly examinations of public education during the early 1980s. The first three sentences of this text echoed the sentiments of A Nation at Risk (NCEE, 1983) and High School: A Report on Secondary Education in America (Boyer, 1983). Goodlad (1984) stated, "American schools are in trouble. In fact, the problems of schooling are of such crippling proportions that many schools may not survive. It is possible that our entire public education system is nearing collapse" (p. 1). Goodlad (1984) described the findings of a study of a sample of schools he believed typified public schools around the country. He concluded that reform efforts must focus on schools as the unit of improvement and that an attitude of caring for schools and education must emerge. Goodlad (1984) examined these themes and focused primarily upon the same general areas of concern addressed by Boyer (1984).

The only reference to concerns specific to students with disabilities made by Goodlad (1984) was the degree to which special education teachers felt adequately prepared to teach or address student needs. Goodlad (1984) noted that a greater number of special education

teachers who worked with secondary-level students felt less adequately prepared compared to the number working with elementary students.

The Shopping Mall High School: Winners and Losers in the Educational Marketplace (Powell, Farrar, & Cohen, 1985)

Powell, Farrar, and Cohen (1985) presented a perspective of high schools as educational "shopping malls." Their book entitled The Shopping Mall High School: Winners and Losers in the Educational Marketplace, included references to the education of individuals with disabilities. The first chapter expounded on the metaphor of the "shopping mall high school" by describing characteristics shared by both shopping malls and high schools. References to students with disabilities addressed curricular options, services mandated by law, and the high proportion of students in special education and remedial education. Also addressed were concerns related to the time spent by counselors on special education students at the expense of time spent on those students without disabilities. It also was noted that students with disabilities were attending regular schools and regular classes. Powell et al. (1985) referred to "specialty shops" which, according to the authors, serve students who "...are regarded by the school as special, as preferred customers" (p. 119). They noted that "A disproportionate fraction of adult time, energy, and resources is lavished on them" (p. 119). One type of specialty shop focused upon the "special-needs shop", which served primarily students with disabilities. This section addressed the passage of P.L. 94-142, the IEP, collaboration between special education and general education teachers, mainstreaming, support services (e.g., sign language translators), the caring and commitment of special educators, and the best balance between challenging work, high expectations, and probability for success. Powell et al. (1985) commented that, "...students classified under P.L. 94-142 have access to a wider range of programs and resources. They are more comprehensively and consistently served than other students and thus form a specialty shop" (p. 126). Another section in the same chapter addressed the admissions criteria for determining "specialness" that allow selection and admission of students into

special-needs shops. A third section addressed the advocacy efforts on behalf of students with disabilities.

The fourth chapter entitled "The Unspecial" addressed concerns of nondisabled students. The contrast between "special-needs" students (e.g., students with disabilities) and students considered "unspecial" was emphasized from the perspective of disparities in services and resources. To summarize, the authors quoted a counselor: "'This is terrible to say,' apologized a counselor, 'but it's not fair that all the money be put into many youngsters that will never be the doctors and lawyers and the leaders of society" (p. 175).

A number of recommendations were advanced at the end of this book. One of the recommendations suggested that "The most obvious way to create more focused educational purpose is to expand upon existing practice: to create more specialty shops" (p. 316).

A New Agenda for Education (Gardner, 1985)

This report, published by Gardner in 1985 and sponsored by the Heritage Foundation, introduced four recommendations: (a) reducing federal involvement in education, (b) restoring the academic and moral emphasis of education, (c) revising teacher training, and (d) allowing competition in education. Relative to reducing federal involvement, Gardner (1985) identified four problems related to the education of individuals with disabilities including mislabeling, fragmentation of the curriculum, mainstreaming, and litigation. Gardner (1985) cited the proliferation of students labeled as learning disabled as a major problem facing education. She concluded that the resource room and the pull-out program models have become a dumping ground for regular students experiencing academic difficulties. She also indicated that general educators are usually ill equipped to deal with students with disabilities. Finally, Gardner (1985) suggested that the due process provisions of P.L. 94-142 "...encourage parents to sue whenever they are dissatisfied with a teacher's or school's handling of their child" (p. 35). This, Gardner (1985) believes, has caused a polarity between schools and parents of students with disabilities.

In short, Gardner's (1985) statement, "Broad mandates that impose rigid standards and procedures...dull America's traditional sense of mutual obligation and charity and the resultant capacity for innovative local solutions" (p. 33), implies that the education of individuals with disabilities should be a function of the kindness and charity of the local community—that the education of citizens with disabilities is in essence, optional.

In the Name of Excellence: The Struggle to Reform the Nation's Schools. Why It's Failing and What Should Be Done (Toch, 1991)

Toch (1991) reviewed the reform efforts of the 1980s and concluded that "Public educators lost the nation's confidence and they paid the price" (p. 39). Subsequent chapters discussed the economic basis and interests in educational reform followed by a description of how reform efforts undertaken by the State of Texas and attempts during the 1980s to improve curricula and instruction in the classroom were undermined. It was in this latter discussion that Toch (1991) addressed the problems of classification, categorization, and placement of students with disabilities. Toch (1991) summarized the functions of P.L. 93-112 and P.L. 94-142 and addressed problems associated with increased numbers of students classified as learning disabled, the stigma associated with special education, low expectations, lack of movement back to regular classes, and financial incentives for classifying students as learning disabled. Finally, Toch (1991) noted the lack of contact and collaboration between bilingual education, special education, and Chapter I teachers with their "mainstream" faculty colleagues.

We Must Take Charge: Our Schools and Our Future (Finn, 1992)

Finn (1992) identified activities characteristic of the reform movement of the 1980s (e.g., increasing standards of student achievement, testing and assessment, school restructuring, school effectiveness). Finn (1992) took issue with mainstreaming in special education commenting that the politically correct position is that children of widely differing levels of ability and prior attainment should be mixed in all schools and classrooms. Just as handicapped children should be mainstreamed into regular classes, so too should high- and

low-achieving youngsters" (pp. 218-219). While Finn (1992) noted that he is strongly opposed to curricular tracking, he was in favor of grouping students functioning at the same level of achievement for instructional purposes.

America 2000: An Education Strategy

The Bush Administration focused upon six goals for attaining educational excellence, to be achieved by the year 2000: (a) all children in America will start school ready to learn; (b) the high school graduation rate will increase to at least 90 percent; (c) American students will leave grades four, eight, and twelve having demonstrated competency in challenging subject matter including English, mathematics, science, history, and geography; and every school in America will ensure that all students learn to use their minds well, so they may be prepared for responsible citizenship, further learning, and productive employment in our modern economy; (d) U.S. students will be first in the world in science and mathematics achievement; (e) every adult American will be literate and will possess the knowledge and skills necessary to compete in a global economy and exercise the rights and responsibilities of citizenship; and (f) every school in America will be free of drugs and violence and will offer a disciplined environment conducive to learning. America 2000 presented a national strategy comprised of four parts: (a) better and more accountable schools, (b) a new generation of American schools, (c) a nation of students, and (d) communities where learning is promoted. The rationale and justification for each strategy were supported with a review of the problems and ills identified by those reports reviewed above. Strategies to be implemented by the Bush Administration with respect to each of the four parts of the American 2000 plan were presented. This document concluded with a description of the roles of the President, congress, governors, the business community, the local community, and parents. It should be noted that no reference was made in this document with respect to the education of individuals with disabilities.

Contemporary Special Education Responses to Educational Reform

The reports released during the 1980s calling for educational reform constitute a growing literature base. Two reports not receiving the national attention received by those reviewed here did address problematic issues related to the education of students with disabilities. These reports were The Heritage Foundation Report (May 11, 1984) and Barriers to Excellence: Our Children At Risk released by the National Coalition of Advocates for Students (NCAS, 1985). Sapon-Sevin (1987) reviewed and analyzed both reports, raising concerns generally applicable to all national reports on education reform. The first observation made by Sapon-Sevin (1987) and other special educators (e.g., Lilly, 1987; Macchiarola, 1989; Shepard, 1987) was that education concerns pertaining to Americans with disabilities were largely ignored. This criticism also is applicable to both America 2000 and numerous responses to America 2000 by educators from the field (e.g., William T. Grant Foundation, 1991). In addition, the two follow-up reports by Finn (1992) and Toch (1991) provided only a cursory examination of problems pertaining to the education of students with disabilities.

Three notable exceptions include the work by Powell et al. (1985), the Heritage Foundation (1984), and the NCAS (1985). The latter two reports identified four concerns in the field of special education: (a) the proliferation of students inappropriately classified and placed in classes for students with learning disabilities and mild mental retardation, (b) costs of educating students with disabilities at the expense of nondisabled students, (c) opening of school records to parents, and (d) the involvement of the federal government to ensure that all students with disabilities receive a free and appropriate public education.

In her analysis of the national reports on education reform, Sapon-Sevin (1987) identified several concerns about the way in which special education issues were addressed or omitted by the national reports. The first involved the relationship between special and general education. Numerous questions have been raised by special educators about the efficacy of separate special education assessment, classification, class placement,

instructional procedures and minority overrepresentation (Algozzine & Korinek 1985; Algozzine, Morsink, & Algozzine, 1988; Danielson & Bellamy, 1989; Gartner 1986; Hagerty & Abramson, 1987; Lipsky & Gartner, 1989; Reschly, 1988; Sansone & Zigmond, 1986; Wang & Reynolds, 1985; Ysseldyke et al., 1983). These questions have evolved into an on-going debate about the "Regular Education Initiative" (a.k.a., full inclusion) focusing on the merger between special and regular education (Byrnes, 1990; Davis, 1989; Jenkins, Pious, & Jewell, 1990; Stainback & Stainback, 1984; Sailor, 1989; Wang, Reynolds, & Walberg, 1986). Sapon-Seven (1987) noted that even those reports critical of policies toward children with disabilities did not question the underlying separateness of special and regular education. For example, Louis Harris (1992) of Louis Harris and Associates argued:

> "Special education was supposed to be the place where those with disabilities and those with lagging ability to learn were given special handling to help them over their disabilities and troubles. But, let's face it, in too many places, it's been the equivalent of a toxic waste dump for those who don't fit into the traditional stereotypes of what a student should be. Have the guts to ask that special ed be restored to what it was supposed to be, and beef up classes for those who don't fit the traditional mold" (p. 14).

The implication of this statement by Harris (1992) is that separation between regular and special education is justified and effective for those in need of "special handling". However, as indicated before, efficacy studies strongly suggest otherwise.

Additional concerns raised by Sapon-Sevin (1987) included the impact of the new standards on students unable to meet them, whether special education students are considered worthy or in need of educational attention, and the assumptions underlying the relationship between educational policy and economic issues. With respect to the latter, Sapon-Sevin (1987) suggested that certain economic and social policies may support the argument that excellence and equity are incompatible and that using economics as a basis

for education reform may lead to detrimental consequences for individuals whose human worth may be devalued by society.

Lipsky and Gartner (1987) presented another salient criticism of the literature on education reform noting that "In education, not only have students with handicapping conditions been ignored in the recent flood of national reports, but the belief persists that they are incapable of learning or behaving appropriately" (p. 70). The quotation made of the counselor reported by Powell et al. (1985) is one example of evidence that this belief is not held exclusively by special educators. It also is representative of leaders in the regular education reform movement. Mortimer Adler (1982), in his treatise, The Paideia Proposal, contended that "With the exception of a few suffering from irremediable brain damage, every child is educable up to his or her capacity. Educable--not just trainable for jobs!" (p. 65).

Greer (1992a) took issue with the findings reported in the education reform literature dealing with the decline in SAT scores, the National Assessment of Educational Progress, and drop-out rates. Greer (1992a) also expressed concerns for criticisms of the increasing costs of special education services. He questioned the decline of education by responding "Is education on the brink of disaster? Is special education in decline? I do not think so, but some of our children are" (p. 201). In response to America 2000, Greer (1992b) argued that the plan "...proposes admirable goals but fails to apply them to all children" (p. 296), implying that again, students with disabilities were ignored by recommendations and plans for education reform.

Robert Davila (1991), former Assistant Secretary of the Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services (OSERS), responded to questions about how special education fits into America 2000 by stating that the wrong question was being asked. He stated, "Rather than trying to fit into education reform, it is my position that special education and rehabilitation should play a leadership role" (p. 5).

Observations

This review was initiated to summarize areas of concern relevant to regular education reform and focused on the extent to which issues related to students with disabilities have been addressed. The following observations regarding these issues may provide clearer direction for the development of a cooperatively-focused research and training agenda that includes issues related to the education of students with disabilities related to education reform. In particular, we refer to special education exclusively in terms of the education of students with disabilities and attempt to identify similarities and differences with regular education (i.e., education of nondisabled students).

Our first observation is that regular education reformists have not adequately addressed the issues of students with disabilities. It also is clear that special educators have not adequately addressed the failure of our public schools to meet the needs of nondisabled students.

Some very interesting parallels exist between the regular education and special education reform literatures. Our review of regular education reform literature indicated that a number of studies showed declining achievement on SAT scores. Similarly, there has been a number of efficacy studies demonstrating the lack of difference between individuals in separate special education classes and those who are retained in regular education classes. In addition, other studies have shown that students who are retained in regular education classes tend to show higher achievement over time. Clearly, both regular and special educators are concerned with achievement and educational outcomes.

Regular educators have addressed the need for full inclusion of minorities in a core academic curriculum and the elimination of tracking. Special educators begun to address the full inclusion of students with disabilities in regular classes using adaptive curriculum models, and the elimination of the distinction between regular and special education. Regular educators are concerned with low expectations of minority groups; special

educators are concerned with low expectations and the devaluation of students with disabilities.

Transition from school to adulthood has been a clear concern of regular educators. Regular educators are concerned about the transition from school to adulthood and postsecondary education, vocational or technical training, and other opportunities (c.f. Boyer, 1983). Emphasis has been placed on academic curricula to ensure better access to college programs and greater success as an adult. In the meantime, special educators have developed a systematic process for ensuring the successful transition of students with disabilities (Rusch, DeStefano, Chadsey-Rusch, Phelps, & Szymanski, 1992).

Special educators argue that regular educators have ignored them. However, special education has developed as a separate track, where the collaboration and involvement of regular educators has traditionally been discouraged. Both regular and special educators believe in the right of all students to not only a free and appropriate education, but an education that prepares students to serve as contributing and responsible members of a democratic society.

Since the passage of P.L. 94-142, issues of access for students with disabilities have dissolved and issues of quality and effectiveness have come to the forefront. Currently, a major issue involving the education of students with disabilities is not whether they can learn, but what should be learned. This issue is of primary concern since it is clear that a totally academic curricula may be appropriate for many but certainly not all students with disabilities. It is important to note that early efforts defining a core academic curriculum presumed that students had the intellectual ability for the mastery of academic skills and that sufficiently advanced pedagogical methods for teaching such material were available for use by teachers. For many students, the mastery of subjects such as Latin, calculus, and physics is an inappropriate and unreasonable educational goal, regardless of whether intellectual ability or pedagogical methodology are lacking. It also is important to note that an exclusively liberal arts curriculum was originally developed as the educational focus

during a historical period in which students with disabilities were denied access to education. Finally, we would argue that curriculum development in the context of regular education has taken a "macro-level" perspective through which all students are seen as capable of and thus required to learn and master essentially the same skills. An example of such a curriculum was advanced by Mortimer Adler in his Paideia Proposal (1982). On the other hand, curriculum development in special education has adopted a "micro-level" perspective in which the focus of the curriculum is the needs of individual students relevant to future environments in which he or she will participate (e.g., Falvey, 1986).

Finally, school restructuring has been the topic of much discussion (O'Neil, 1990; Tyack, 1990). Articles on school restructuring in the regular education literature have focused primarily on the need for decentralization of authority and leadership, downsizing school populations, revision of curriculum and instruction, paring down middle management, and refocusing efforts on improving the decision-making of teachers (Tyack, 1990). Interestingly, articles in special education have surfaced that address the need to restructure regular education classrooms in order to facilitate full inclusion (e.g., Villa & Thousand, 1992). Issues addressed by these articles include redefining teaching roles (e.g., Graden & Bauer, 1992), development of collaborative teaching models (e.g., Pugach & Johnson, 1990), adapting regular classroom curricula and instruction (e.g., Ford, Davern, & Schnorr, 1992; Wang, 1989), and determining the amount of time spent in specific instructional activities (Brown et al., 1991). Clearly, school restructuring is on the minds of both regular and special educators.

These observations were presented with the intent of demonstrating that while some differences remain to be resolved, there is strong evidence that regular and special educators are addressing common issues. We would argue that more congruence than disparity exists between regular and special education with respect to concerns and issues in the area of education reform. In addition, we believe that the resolution of the differences that do exist

will serve both students with and without disabilities if the resolution focuses on all students.

On the basis of our first observation, we would suggest that while it is easy for special educators to criticize regular education reformists for not addressing the needs of students with disabilities, we would suggest that this is a parochial viewpoint and not very constructive. Special educators must first mainstream, integrate, and fully include themselves as bonafide educators, with the competence and expertise to assist any student in need, before they can expect students with disabilities to be mainstreamed, integrated, and fully included. To accomplish this, we strongly recommend that special educators provide their full support for the reform of public school education in America. In this respect, we recommend that the issues of full inclusion and the merger of regular and special education be placed on the national education reform agenda. Clearly, the merger of special and regular education will require extensive restructuring of schools and teacher training programs throughout the country. However, it also will require a reexamination, if not national debate, on what education is, what our national education goals should be, and how educational goals should be developed for individuals with heterogeneous needs. For this to occur, education reform must address all students, including students with disabilities, and acknowledge and respect not only cultural but intellectual diversity.

Second, continued efforts must be made to evaluate the impact of practices in education reform, full inclusion, and transition. Of particular importance is the need to demonstrate clear relationships between instructional practices, educational achievement, and postsecondary outcomes (Carnine, 1992; Lindsley, 1992). Certainly, strategies for full inclusion might be evaluated in terms of (a) the extent that instructional strategies for full inclusion are replicable and are effective for achieving measurable levels of competence; (b) the extent that full inclusion strategies may be applied within the skill level, management, and resource constraints of regular educators, schools, and classrooms; and (c) the types of

resources and restructuring that will be necessary to achieve clearly defined educational outcomes.

Third, all services currently limited to students with disabilities should be made available to all students. For instance, transition services might be adapted and revised for the early identification of students at risk of dropping out and used to develop plans for drop-out prevention. We also would argue that transition plans should be developed for students who do drop out in order to develop a mechanism to allow students to reconnect with schools, including access to adult education programs. Clearly, re-accessing school services is much more difficult than dropping out. Full inclusion for all secondary students must include a mechanism that allows students to formalize their plans for exiting school. This mechanism must be more than a half-hour talk with a guidance counselor. In addition, all students must be provided the opportunity to ultimately take control of their own lives for better or for worse.

Finally, a better understanding of the impact of the involvement of the local community in the direction and support of our public schools is in order. It is important that a greater effort be made to involve individuals from the community in the development, expansion, improvement and decision-making of our schools. This may have the additional benefit of facilitating greater community participation and access by students with disabilities.

Recommendations

We make the following recommendations with the intent of proposing a cooperative relationship between regular and special educators and ensuring the improvement of America's schools for all children.

Recommendation #1

We argue that special and regular educators must begin to understand that they are addressing the same problems in the same schools. If a discrepancy exists it is primarily an issue of language and communication. While educators talk about problems related to

tracking, special educators are concerned about the efficacy of segregated, pull-out, and "special" programs. In essence while the context, student populations and mechanics may differ, the issues are essentially the same. However, this understanding will require the development of a minimum level of trust among all educators; the trust that all educators are concerned about all students.

Recommendation #2

Related to our first recommendation, special educators must establish a leadership role in education reform in several ways. First, the goal of America 2000 that only 90% of America's students will graduate successfully ready to enter adult life must be unconditionally rejected. This allows a 10% window of failure that will be open for much higher rates over time. In addition, this window for allowing failure may represent the student populations that special educators work with every day. We, therefore, recommend that this national goal be raised to 100% to reflect this nation's commitment to the ideal that the failure of a single student in this country is intolerable.

Recommendation #3

Related to the second recommendation we recommend that graduation and achievement criteria be revised to accommodate the intellectual diversity of all students including students with severe disabilities. In short, we believe that the focus on academic achievement as the sole criteria for judging readiness to participate as a successful American citizen ignores the fact that thousands of Americans with disabilities who have not achieved such academic standards are contributing and participating members of American society. Therefore, we recommend that national standards for judging education achievement and readiness be developed that address the learning and educational characteristics and opportunities of all students including students with disabilities.

Recommendation #4

The education reform literature must be expanded to incorporate findings from efficacy studies and other studies that have focused on the performance and outcomes of students

receiving special education services. At the present, little if any of the education reform literature has specifically addressed the needs of students with disabilities. In addition, research that has provided substantive evidence of effective teaching practices must be addressed for all students.

Recommendation #5

Full inclusion, transition, early intervention, self-determination, and other such issues should no longer be viewed as discrete initiatives specific to special education. We strongly urge a move to placing these issues and concerns on the regular education reform agenda. It is incomprehensible that services are denied to any student on the basis of disability or nondisability.

Recommendation #6

Clearly, the dissemination of information pertaining to best practices and associated outcomes related to the schooling of students with disabilities or deemed at-risk may have tremendous benefit for students who are nondisabled or not at risk. The school of the future must offer effective and new technologies generated from special education and rehabilitation to further the goals of all students with and without disabilities.

Of particular importance is the need to explore the potential benefits of various practices and technologies generated from special education when applied to students without disabilities. For example, we believe the research and practices evolving from transition research and demonstration programs and from the current self-determination model demonstration programs may have tremendous impact on reducing dropout rates, decreasing substance abuse, and providing students the motivation to continue their schooling. We believe that all students should have the opportunity to develop transition plans which focus on their goals as adults and facilitate attainment of these goals.

Recommendation #7

While school restructuring has been an issue for several years, it is clear that much of the focus has been on the organization and management of the internal business of schools

as it has been conducted traditionally. A more focused approach that addresses school restructuring specific to student-referenced issues should be considered. For example, we believe that changes pertaining to the scope and breadth of instruction will require a national reformulation of the school year. In addition, we believe that those students who drop out of school should have access to expanded opportunities to renew or continue their schooling.

Recommendation #8

Our final recommendation involves the development of a research agenda that specifically focuses on the impact of recommendations from the education reform literature. Specifically, it should be a national imperative to determine the extent to which specific reform recommendations have been implemented and to evaluate outcomes associated with their implementation. In addition, we strongly urge a review of current initiatives to determine the extent to which specific practices currently limited to students receiving special education might benefit students without disabilities, particularly students deemed at-risk. Finally, the extent to which a focus on traditional academic standards may produce barriers to successful school achievement must be examined. In short, we recommend the development of a research agenda that focuses on the merger of special and regular education reform activities that benefit all students.

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